

## [Special Procedures | What skills do we need in the next UN expert on human rights defenders?](#)

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ISHR and 130 other organisations have set out [the criteria](#) that should be at the heart of the selection of the next UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. As Michel Forst's term as mandate holder comes to an end, candidates have until [17 October 2019](#) to submit their applications for the position. Defenders from marginalised groups or from under-represented communities and identities are strongly encouraged to apply.

***If your organisation would like to endorse the criteria, please sign on [here](#).***

ISHR's Programme Manager Helen Nolan explains that the Special Rapporteur plays a key role in the recognition and protection of those who promote and defend human rights.

'Human rights defenders often face serious challenges and risks as a result of their human rights work, and so the mandate seeks to promote a safe and enabling environment for them around the world,' says Nolan. As [the document](#) highlights, the mandate does this work in many ways.

'With the power to report and advise countries on how to make the right to defend rights a reality, mandate holders have helped bring about real change on the ground,' says Nolan. For example, Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders have:

- visited dozens of countries in all regions to examine the situation of human rights defenders on the ground and make recommendations to strengthen their protection;
- investigated the situation and protection needs of groups of defenders particularly at risk, most recently looking at women human rights defenders, environmental defenders, and people on the move; and
- raised thousands of cases of alleged human rights violations against human rights defenders around the globe.

'131 organisations working nationally, regionally and internationally have come together to [set out](#) the skills and expertise that should be taken into account in the appointment of the next expert in March 2020,' explains Nolan. These fit under 4 priorities:

- qualifications and skills;
- relevant expertise
- established competence;
- and flexibility/ readiness and availability

The [document](#) also provides information on the application process, and underlines the importance of

independence and impartiality, as well as experience or knowledge of the realities faced by human rights defenders.

'Human rights defenders who are most at risk around the world are often persons with discriminated identities or from communities that are marginalised, so the Special Rapporteur should be able to consider the particular contexts and challenges faced by these individuals and groups with the benefit of insights from the mandate holder's personal experience,' emphasises Nolan.

'We all strongly encourage nominations of such human rights defenders, including women and gender diverse persons,' adds Nolan.

The checklist is available [here](#).

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